

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO ALEC GIFFORD

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I pay tribute this morning to a great American journalist from New Orleans, LA. Alec Gifford will be formally retiring from WDSU in New Orleans this December after an extraordinarily lengthy, fulfilling, and energetic career covering politics and a whole range of issues over decades, including hurricanes, storms and other disasters. He even hosted, believe it or not, a cooking show.

Alec came from a family of journalists. His father covered Governor Huey Long for the Times-Picayune, and his grandfather published one of the first local French language newspapers. So his family tradition has deep roots in Louisiana and in New Orleans. After serving in the U.S. Navy, Alec came to WDSU in 1955. He introduced the people of Louisiana to a very young Senator at the time, John F. Kennedy, as he sought to become—and ultimately did—the President of the United States. Just as we have spent many hours on this floor in recent months and years discussing the share of royalties that Louisiana should get from energy production off of our coast—and I believed I was the first on the story—I was corrected by my staff that Alec Gifford was one of the first on the story four decades ago.

He asked Senator Kennedy his position on how these royalties would be handled when he came in to campaign for the Presidency back then. And he also pressed him on the Nation's path toward an equal education for all of our children during that extraordinary historic interview.

Louisiana later gave all of its electoral votes to Senator Kennedy, who became our 35th President. We then, of course, passed major legislation for equal opportunity, and today or tomorrow we will be passing a historic piece of legislation on royalty sharing after all these many years.

Alec was a journalist who always knew the important stories and managed to explain them to the people at home in a way they could grasp and understand the impact on their daily, everyday lives, and their future.

But Alec really made a name for himself in 1965, demonstrating his dedication to the story when Hurricane Betsy struck Louisiana. While every other station had lost their ability to broadcast back in 1965—the city and region were basically dark and shut down, and the winds were howling, and the waters were almost as high as during Katrina—Alec stood in the path of the hurricane and brought images of the storm into every home that could receive a television signal.

Forty years later, he was there again for us with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. He evacuated himself to Jackson,

MS, but stayed on the story, as many brave journalists did. But Alec has been doing this for so long. His accomplishments throughout this were singular. Working his way—scratching, crawling his way—back to New Orleans, like many of our journalists did, he continued to stay on the story.

The hurricanes could not stop him. The flooding could not stop him. And in a few simple sentences, Alec Gifford illustrated the magnitude of the impact that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have had on Louisiana, when he said:

This is nothing like Betsy. . . . Betsy was a horrible storm. Betsy was a walk in the park. I cannot believe how Katrina and Rita have turned our world upside down and backward. Isn't it amazing how everything changes?

But Alec has not changed at all over these decades. He has stayed resolute, committed to his craft, energetic, and absolutely consistent in his work ethic. He is almost 80 years young, and he has never slowed down. His colleague, Travers Mackel, can attest to that. He said:

I'm 31 years old, and I have a tough time keeping up with him. He's the first one in to work [in the morning] and the last one out the door.

His news director, Anzio Williams, said: "I don't ever want to hear anybody complain," he says to his staff, "about being overworked and overstressed. This guy, [referring to Alec], outworks everybody."

But after a half a century on the air, at WDSU, WVUE, and for NBC News, Alec has decided to retire. He has certainly left his mark on the news in New Orleans, hiring the next generation of WDSU in anchor Norm Robinson and reporter Richard Angelico—who both have done an outstanding job for our community—but he will now be able to spend more time with the people he cares about most, his wife Delores, his five children, and his eight grandchildren.

He is truly part of the soul of our city, and a shining example of the best in his craft—a reporter to the core, a man willing to stay on the job, no matter what, to tell the story, to tell it right, to tell it clearly. Alec Gifford may be leaving the studio, but he is not leaving our hearts and our memories. I for one would not be surprised to see him on television again. I am sure he will come back in a different capacity, in a different way, but this Senator would like to say how much I have personally appreciated his service to our community and wanted to pay tribute to Alec Gifford today on the eve of his retirement from WDSU.

HONORING SENATORIAL SERVICE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I have a few more minutes before the 10:30 vote, and I take this time to say a few words about some of my colleagues who are retiring. We had a good bit of time yesterday devoted to their tremendous contributions, and as

each of us, the 100 of us, do know each other pretty well, I have come to the floor to say a few things about several of the colleagues I have had the distinct pleasure of working with very closely.

BILL FRIST

Mr. President, one is, of course, Senator BILL FRIST, our retiring majority leader. I had the wonderful opportunity to be invited to travel with Senator FRIST. I guess you could say it was clearly an opportunity. It was not necessarily a pleasurable trip in the sense that the first trip I took with him was to tour the devastation of the tsunami. Soon after he assumed the role of leader, the tsunami hit the Indian coastline. It was one of the largest disasters in the recent history of the world.

I had a chance to go to that region with Senator FRIST. I actually saw him firsthand don his doctor's coat and take off, if you will, his hat as Senator and put on his coat as doctor and operate. I agreed to go on that trip with him under one condition, that I myself would not have to go with him into the operating rooms. So I stayed outside and talked with people while he went in and actually did the hard work of saving people's lives and bringing them back to health.

But what I will most remember about that trip—and there were about six of us on it—is that he was the first one awake in the morning, the last one to go to bed at night, constantly working until the point where those of us said we are unlikely to ever travel with him again because we could not get any rest through the entire week and were so exhausted when we got back. We said: If he calls again to ask us to travel, tell him I am doing something else. I am kidding, of course. But I say that with the greatest admiration for a man who has an extraordinary work ethic. And through so many ups and downs, literally, of these helicopters and trips, I remember him staying so steady and so calm, even when we saw some of the most horrific sights you can imagine.

But he has led this Chamber and brought his own style of leadership and his own gifts that God has given him to this Chamber. I am a Senator who truly admires that particular aspect of his service and wanted to put that into the RECORD in a small way this morning.

JIM JEFFORDS

Mr. President, I also want to remember for a minute the good work of Senator JEFFORDS. Senator JEFFORDS tends to be one of the quiet Members of the Senate. Some of us talk a lot more than others. He does not do much talking, but he sure gets a lot done. I will never forget, and the people of Louisiana are so grateful to Senator JEFFORDS, as he chaired the EPW Committee, for being one of the first Senators in this Chamber to recognize the extraordinary loss of our wetlands and what it would mean to south Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico. And ultimately, of course, we saw the tragedy